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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; US PRESIDENT BUSH'S LATAM TOUR; IRAQ;
GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM; 03/22/07; BUENOS AIRES

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Leading international stories today include the implications for Argentina of US President Bush's tour of Latin America; an assessment of the four-year war in Iraq; and misconceptions in the US-led Global War on Terrorism.

2. OPINION PIECES

- "The political scenario is marked by provincial elections"

Leading "Clarín" carries an op-ed page by Carlos Acuña, Director, Master in Public Policies, Universidad San Andrés, and researcher at Conicet (Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas) (National Council on S&T Research), who penned (03/22) "... (US President George W.) Bush's visit to Brazil, Uruguay, Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico seems a belated 'I-have-not-forgiven-you' signal, aimed at putting a siege on anti-US President Chavez's voice.

"This wink, which is based on an axis with Brazil, is historical and has little to do with Argentina's current policies...

"... (Bush's) visit to Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico is a visit to 'friendly' governments, through which (the USG) expects to neutralize the mistrust typical of the Southern Cone...

"... The Kirchner administration (gladly?) paid the cost of tolerating in its own territory a political rally led by a foreign president in defiance of another foreign president based on the fact that, regardless of sovereignty-related issues, Bush's visit to Lula and Vazquez granted (Kirchner) little gratitude for Argentina's stance on Iran and too much political air to the Uruguayan president in a framework of the prevailing tension with Argentina.

"In brief, there is nothing new or dramatic in the US President's tour of Latin America. If this is so, his tour has been a sign of USG weakness rather than a historical change in US ties to the region or some of its country-members. In this framework, Argentina neither won nor lost.

"The most important event for Argentina in recent days was not Bush's visit to Latin America but provincial elections in Catamarca."

- "The force that works wonders"

James Neilson, contributor to liberal, English-language "Buenos Aires Herald," writes (03/22) "... A precipitate US retreat from Iraq would be welcomed by most people in Europe and Latin America not because they imagine it would help make the Middle East a kinder

and gentler place... but because they want to see the superpower humbled.

"After more than half a century of being shielded by US power against totalitarian and on occasion genocidal communism, Western Europeans have contrived to persuade themselves that military force is always useless and that all problems can be solved by peaceful negotiations...

"Unfortunately, there are still plenty of people out there who do not think like modern Europeans. Militant Islamists, Arab nationalists and many others take it for granted that force works wonders, which is why they are more than willing to use it. So far they have been proved right. The best way to wring concessions from Western countries is to attack them and then threaten them with more violence. Whenever a terrorist atrocity occurs, a sizeable chunk of public opinion can be relied upon to blame it on the local government and accuse it of failing to address the terrorists' grievances."

- "Four years of war in Iraq"

Leading "Clarín" editorializes (03/22) "After four years of war, Iraq poses today a greater threat to international peace and security than when the US decided to launch its 'Iraqi Freedom' operation.

"... The most powerful army in the world managed to defeat Saddam Hussein, but not to establish any kind of orderly system, to the extreme that Iraq's territorial integrity is today at risk.

"On the other hand, the costs of war (about 150 million dollars per day) have already affected the US economy and, therefore, global economy and will continue doing so in the future.

"... As long as occupying powers do not manage to guarantee a ruling system in Iraq, the troop withdrawal will not only signify the assumption of a huge strategic error but also the evidence of its destabilizing impact on the most conflictive region in the world."

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